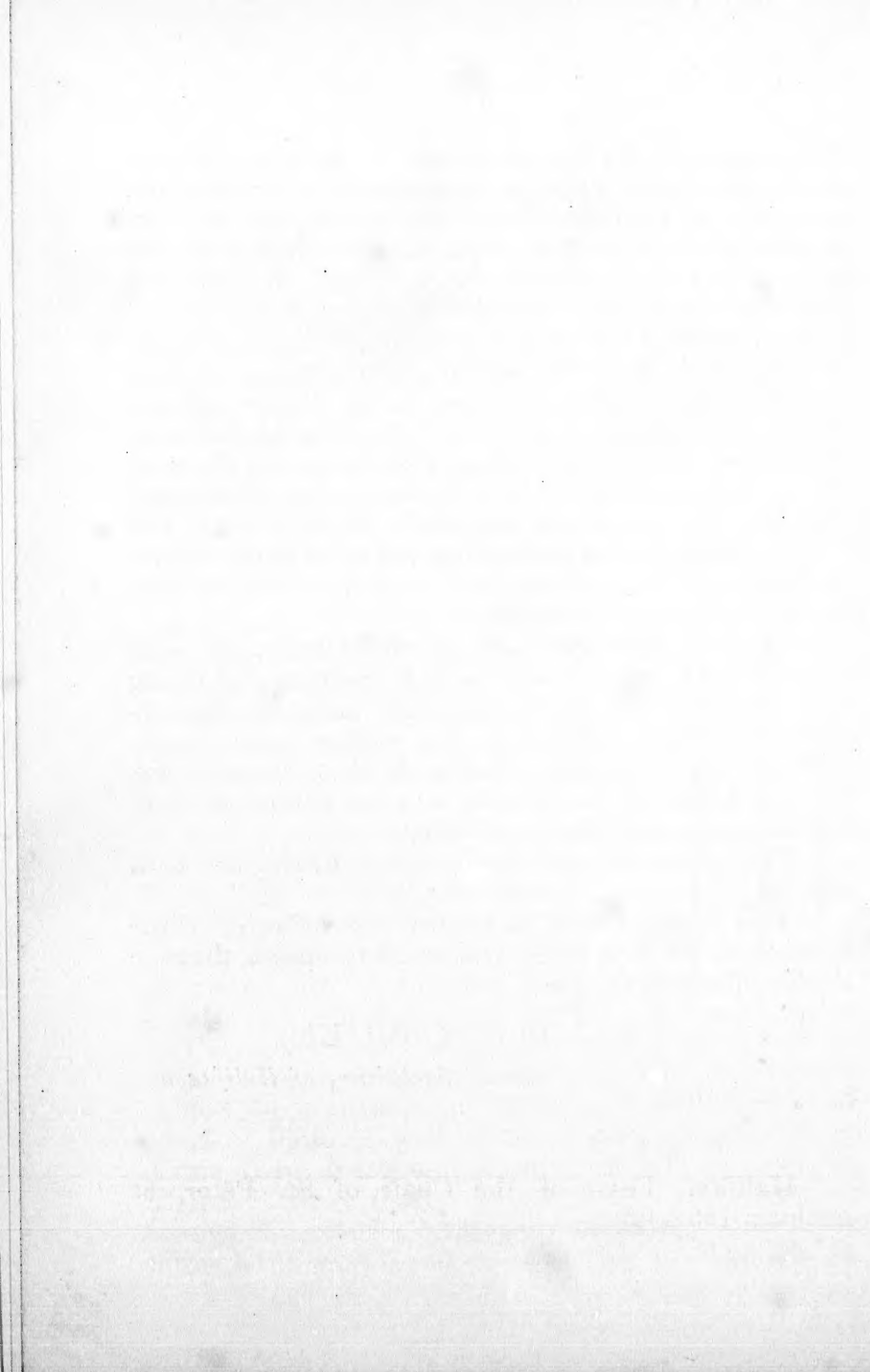




**Cornellus, by the Grace of God and favor
of the Apostolic See, Archbishop of
Halifax.**

**To the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese, Health and
Benediction in the Lord.**

DEARLY BELOVED :

The holy season of Lent, which is now approaching, requires that we should call home our wandering thoughts; avoid all dissipation and frivolous pastimes, and enter seriously into a consideration of our accountability, as reasonable beings, to the Author of our existence, who is also the goal of our hopes and aspirations. An unreflecting and thoughtless life cannot be the one intended for rational creatures. It would be a contradiction in terms so to assert, for reason has been bestowed on us to be used, not to be buried beneath the follies of a merely animal existence. And yet how very many make little or no use of our most noble faculty in these matters which pertain to the great truth of their life in a future state. Business affairs, or the indulgence of the lower passions, or a restless striving after pleasures to amuse or to fill up the days and nights of a butterfly existence, engross the attention of the world, to the exclusion of all serious thought of the great hereafter. And yet the conscious certainty of that hereafter is indelibly imprinted by Nature on each human intelligence; "Not all of me shall die," is the infallible pronouncement of our inner consciousness, as well as a consoling dogma of Divine Faith.

Whilst at all seasons we should be mindful of our last end, in a special manner we are called upon to be so during the Lenten time. Hence Holy Church sprinkles the foreheads of her children with ashes, on the first day of Lent, and reminds them by the mouth of her Priest whilst so doing, that they must die. She calls on them to renounce forever all sin and all forms of sinful amusements, and to forego for a time, at least, even those which, though harmless in themselves, are sources of distraction, and consequently unsuited for the penitential period. She prescribes the mortification of Fast and Abstinence as an atonement for past excesses, and as an efficacious means of bringing our rebellious passions into subjection. She enjoins prayer and almsgiving to obtain God's grace, without which it is impossible to please Him, or to lead an ordered Christian life. With the Prophet she calls on us to rend our hearts by true sorrow and repentance, and not our garments only.

Lent, like all the observances of Holy Church, is not a mere formality devoid of that inner spirit which alone can give meaning and efficacy ; it is founded on the example of our Divine Lord, informed by the great principle of atonement, and wonderfully adapted to the conditions of life in every age. Hence the many Spiritual benefits to be derived by passing it in conformity with the intentions that led up to its institution.

It is founded on the example of our Lord. We read that Jesus having been "led by the spirit into the desert" fasted "forty days and forty nights." That was the first Lent, and it served as a model for succeeding ones. The example given by the Master was imitated by His Spouse the Church. Now, we know that even the smallest recorded action of our Lord is fraught with deep significance, and has been set down for our edification, instruction and example. "I have given you an example that as I have done to you, so

you do also," (John XIII—15) are the words of our Saviour himself. Therefore, this prolonged act of mortification for forty days must be intended to teach a great lesson to mankind. The Scripture tells us that Jesus went into the desert to fast (Math. IV.) Retirement from the distractions of every day life, a withdrawal from the society of friends, and complete silence, were therefore features of our Lord's Lent. Mortification could not have been the sole aim of our Lord, for fasting could have been practiced in his humble home at Nazareth. He wished to inculcate the further lesson of the necessity of silent meditation, and undisturbed prayer, in order that we may commune with God, and seriously reflect on our lives, and thus understand whither we are tending. "In my meditation fire is enkindled," says the Psalmist, that is, a light of supernatural knowledge, and a burning love of God, are the fruits of a soul's communing with its maker in the calm of retirement. The light of Grace thus vouchsafed the soul reveals the unspeakable deformity of sin, and the baseness of our ingratitude in committing it; the folly of bartering our heirship to God's kingdom for the fleeting gratifications of our senses, or for the petty and quickly vanishing honors or riches of the world, is made clearly apparent. We realize then as never before the great truth expressed so pathetically by our Saviour, "What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, if his soul should suffer detriment?" The intelligence being thus enlightened and instructed by a keener appreciation of the duty of making sure one's salvation, the Will will be strengthened to resist temptations, and to fulfill more faithfully the commandments of God.

Our Saviour wished to exemplify this. We must, of course, bear in mind that he was truly God as well as truly man. Hence for Himself he required no prayer for strength, as he had no need of the atonement

of fast and abstinence. But he had taken up the burden of our sins, and for these he would atone. Again, he was incapable of yielding to temptation—incapable even of being tempted, had he not permitted it—but as a lesson and a consolation to us he allowed the tempter to offer his suggestions immediately after his forty days of Lent, to show that the grace of resistance is in our case, to be sought for by prayer and acts of self-denial. Under three forms did the tempter make his sinful suggestions to our Lord, and each time with increasing audacity. He first sought to induce our Saviour to turn stones into bread to satisfy his hunger; next he strove to excite a sentiment of presumption by urging Him to cast Himself down from a high place; finally he unfolded the full pride of his pretensions and the falseness of his nature by promising what he could not give in return for divine worship. Pointing out from the top of a lofty mountain the kingdoms of the earth, and their glory, the evil one said:—"All these will I give thee if falling down thou wilt adore me." This is the same deceptive promise that Satan is continually making to mankind. He promises them pleasure, happiness, and the glory of life, if they will serve him instead of God. Even could he keep his promise these things would be a poor recompense for the loss of our souls. But he has no power, nor, intention of keeping it. Yet how many listen to the tempter, and with eager trust deliver themselves over to him; renounce, or carelessly break God's law; reject His revealed word, and endeavor to turn His Gospel into ridicule. It is quite true that they do not literally "fall down" and worship, in set language, the demon as God; neither do they perhaps, make a formal act of renunciation of Christ their Saviour. But just as disloyalty to a nation's cause is shown more fully by actions than by words, so rebellion against the divine law, a rejection of God in one's daily life, and servitude to sin

may be verified by conduct, although no compromising word may have been spoken. Those who pray not, who live without thought of God, who are intent only on the gratification of their own whims and desires, who lead sensual indulgent lives, who are more concerned at what society may think of their mode of life than how it may appear in the Light of Heaven, or who can find time for all worldly amusements, but cannot spare an hour for serious reflection, all these are doing what Satan asked Christ to do, viz., to "fall down and adore" him. Do they get in return what he promised? Ah! we have only to look on the shattered frames, the blackened reputations, the homes disgraced, the polluted family lives, the decadence of womanly modesty, and the increase of scandals, that abound, to see how sadly they have been deceived. Or we can consider the restlessness of intellect wildly groping after truth outside of God and never finding it; and the sadness that broods over so large a portion of mankind, making their days dreary, and filling their writings with gloomy forebodings of universal evil. From these we can learn how the promises of Satan have been kept. Instead of pleasure, pain and infirmity; instead of peace and calm enjoyment, dissatisfaction and gloom; vague guesses and aimless longings instead of truth and knowledge; and instead of glory and honour, shame and mortified vanity. Had they spent a Lent with Christ they would have answered the tempter as He did—"Begone Satan, for it is written: the Lord thy God thou shalt adore and Him only shalt thou serve." (Math. IV—10). During Lent, then, we are to imitate our Saviour by fasting and praying, that we may be strengthened to follow Him in repelling the tempter.

From that it is evident that Lent is not a mere ceremonial observance. The principle of atonement gives it life and value. Punishment of sin is not a caprice on the part of God; it is a law, as fixed and as

unvarying in its consequences as the law of gravitation. This latter is founded in the nature of matter ; the former in the essential justice and order of the Godhead. Disorder caused by a departure from God's law, is called sin ; by atonement we come back to subjection to the law, and repair, in as much as we can, the insult and injury offered to God by disobedience. Only in this way can we escape the consequence of sin, viz., punishment. If we freely chose to live estranged from God by disobedience to his law, and die in that state, we must continue to live for all eternity in that deliberate estrangement, with all that it implies.

Lent is adapted to the conditions of life in every age, for in all ages men require time and opportunity for reflection, and for holding serious converse with God. These are obtained in Lent by foregoing harmless amusements and social gatherings ; the time and quiet thus secured afford the needed opportunities for meditation on the great truths of Religion, and the means to be employed to attain to eternal bliss.

The proper observance of Lent, then, consists in imitating in as much as we can the prayer and fast of our divine Saviour during his forty days of retirement in the desert. It is therefore a holy and salutary practice, and conducive to our highest spiritual interests.

You can see this verified in the circle of your acquaintance ; the more thoughtful and spiritual minded, the purest of heart and the most devoted to duty are those who best observe the Lenten season. The whole life of our Saviour was an outward manifestation of the spirit of Lent, although he did not always fast, nor was he continually praying, in the usual meaning of that word. So, too, our every thought and action should be informed by the principles that give Lent its value, although we may not be practising its special observances all the year round. Thus the yoke of Christianity is adapted to the circumstances and require-

ments of human life, and is never a load except to the rebellious and self-indulgent.

Do you, Dearly Beloved, enter with sentiments of devotion, and with a lively remembrance of your wants and responsibilities, on this approaching penitential season. It is a matter of regret that some Catholics allow themselves to be influenced by their surroundings, and thus will not forego for a season, at least, fully and generously, idle distracting assemblages, or social dissipations. Try one Lent spent, in spirit, with Jesus in the desert place, and see how sweet and good it is to wait on the Lord. Be thoughtful; all flesh is grass, and soon shall it be cut down, and its quality tried "as by fire." Be watchful; dangers to faith and morals abound, and only the grace of the Almighty can preserve you from contamination. Be prudent: Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he reap. If the seeds of vice be implanted in the soul the tares and cockles will choke all virtuous aspirations, and what should be a garden lovely in the sight of the angels, and sacred to God alone, will become a devastated field, through which all wild beasts of the forest, viz., loathsome vices, will pass through and befoul.

Reflect for a short time each day on the sufferings and death of our Saviour. Contemplate Him in His agony in the garden, crushed down by the weight of our sins, for which he had to suffer; but bruised and crushed more in His soul at the sight of our ingratitude. He was offering Himself for us, and He saw us ready to betray Him through pride, or passion, or human respect. See Him bearing the Cross to the weight of which your daily sins make an addition. See Him dying on the Cross with arms outstretched as if pleading with all to leave their sinful ways and come to Him. Stand in spirit beneath that Cross with "Mary, His Mother," and our Mother as well, and ask your heart

if ever there was such love as His love for us ; and if ever there was such baseness as that of those who having known Christ and received His favors, nevertheless insult and outrage Him by sin. Be attentive at prayer, both in public and private. If you cannot assist at the Rosary in the Church, say it at home. Let all the family assemble at a suitable hour of the evening and unite with their brethren throughout the world in commemorating the life and passion of our Divine Saviour, as set forth in the various mysteries of the Rosary. The prayer of the just will penetrate the heavens, and the sincere cry of the sinner for pardon and mercy will be heard at the foot-stool of God's throne, and will be answered by Him who came to call not the just, but sinners, to repentance. To all mankind has been given the power of prayer: if used aright it will infallibly lead to everlasting happiness. Our God is not a capricious tyrant, delighting in the sufferings of the human race: He is a loving Father, governing the world according to laws in keeping with His own nature, and adapted to our dignity as free and reasonable beings. As free agents we must co-operate with His Grace in observing His law, to the observance of which has been attached the promise of life everlasting. To sincere prayer has been guaranteed the aids and strength necessary for this co-operation ; and to each and all there has been lovingly given the power of prayer. Hence, our heavenly Father has made easy to men of good will the road to future bliss. By fervent prayer you will be given light to see the horror of sin, and grace to truly repent for past offenses. By a sincere and humble confession pardon will be obtained, and the obligation of the Easter duty will be fulfilled. We exhort you all, Dearly Beloved, to spend this Lent in a truly Catholic spirit, and to worthily approach the Sacraments before its termination.

During this year the Catholic world is rejoicing in the golden jubilee of our Holy Father the Pope; pray for him that God may prolong his days for the good of Religion and the exaltation of the Church.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus be with you all, brethren.

This Pastoral shall be read in every Church of the Diocese on the first Sunday after its reception that the Pastor officiates therein.

✠ C. O'BRIEN,

Archbishop of Halifax.

E. F. MURPHY,

Pro. Secretary.

Given at Halifax on the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, 1893.